

Framing Risks: How National Environmental Organizations Frame Risks To Mobilize Opposition to Hydraulic Fracturing

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The recent controversy about hydraulic fracturing has attracted the attention of environmental interest groups. These groups have raised perceived associated risks as a way to influence public support and government policy. This research examines how national environmental organizations mobilize public opposition to hydraulic fracturing. The theories of framing and risks provide the foundation for this study, as framing issues and risks can have significant implications for public perceptions. These frameworks provide theoretical explanations about how people organize around different ways of framing an issue, and also support the idea that interest groups can influence the public to be mobilized around an issue.

Qualitative methods have been used to investigate how the groups' perceived audiences relate to the more general urban and rural demographics in the areas in which they work, as well as how they reframe risks to reach different audiences. Through purposeful sampling of environmental groups in the region, semi-structured in-depth interviews with national organizations were conducted, and organizational documents were collected for analysis. The result of this research can have significant contribution to the understanding of the successes and failures of organizations using risks in framing of an issue. Based on these findings, I discuss recommendation for organizational framing, risk communication, energy policy, and potential future research.